

Testimony for Defense Approps

I would like to begin by thanking the committee for its support last year in keeping Lajes Field as a strategic operational asset for the nation. And to that end, I request that the committee continue that effort by preventing any funds in the Fiscal Year 2015 Defense Appropriations from being allocated to reduce force structure at Lajes.

The base's strategic location has enhanced the United States' control of the Atlantic since World War II. It allows for U.S. access to Europe, the Middle East, and western and sub-Saharan Africa, and enables the expeditionary movement of warfighters, aircraft, ships, and global communications to AFRICOM and CENTCOM's joint, coalition, and NATO operations.

It is also a vital site for countering a major regional threat, al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, which has known ties to al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula and other violent groups. Furthermore, Lajes is well-positioned to act as a logistical hub not only for the Defense Department, but also for USAID, the State Department, and other agencies.

This committee has invested nearly \$150 million in housing, security, and other infrastructure upgrades over the past 12 years to provide Lajes with modern capabilities and amenities. Alarming, the Air Force has been systematically downsizing at Lajes and reducing personnel there in direct contradiction of Congressional direction and intent. I have no doubt that we will lose this asset forever if these reductions continue.

Russia's invasion of Crimea shows that even in Europe, sudden destabilizing events – including the outbreak of war – are a real possibility, not some archaic theory from a bygone age. Now more than ever, we must counter the threat that Russia, China, or some other bad actor could outflank us in the Atlantic.

Losing Lajes intensifies this threat. Keeping Lajes diminishes it.

Thank you for your time today. I'd be happy to answer any questions you have.